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WINNOWING

DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

BY
MRS. LULU T. REESE

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CHARACTERS.

JAMES K. POLK NICHOLAS.
JOSIAH NICHOLAS.
BETSY NICHOLAS, wife of Josiah.
MALINDA NICHOLAS, daughter of Josiah.
AMANDA, wife of James.
LUCILE, daughter of James.
PERCY CARROLL
TOM GILROY.
ROSE GILROY, wife of Tom.
CARROLL ARNOLD.
CAPTAIN THORNTON.
BLANCHE VAN DYKE.
ROBERT, negro butler.

TIME: 1870 TO THE PRESENT.

ACT I.

SCENE 1. (A rude log structure located in the rural district of East Tennessee. In the open passage between the two rooms are seated Josiah Nicholas and his wife, Betsy; Josiah in a split-bottom chair tilted against the wall, smoking a cob pipe, which is his constant companion. Betsy is busily knitting.)

JOSIAH. "Do you know, Betsy, whur thet boy gits them lazy, good-fur-nothin' ways uf his'n is sumpin I don't onderstand. He never will larn to plow, an' he won't so much as drap the corn right. He's been gone fur more'n a haf hour fur that bucket er water, an' when he gits here it won't be more'n haf full. I did want to make a respectable farmer out'en Jeems K. Polk, but it jist looks like it ain't no use tryin'; he ain't got it in him, an' thet's all thur's to it."

BETSY. "Well, Josiah, I sumtimes thinks you ain't got 'nough patience with Jeems K. Polk."

JOSIAH. "Patience (looking over his spectacles). Patience! Now, that beats me. Why, I've been thet patient with thet boy, I've lost my own self-respect lots uf times. I says to myself over an' agin: 'Josiah Nicholas, you're a natural-born fool 'bout thet boy. Why don't you take a strop an' war him out, 'sted'er callin' him out'en bed ever mornin' thet the good Lord sends, an' then a-tellin' an' a-showin' him the same thing over ever blessed day, a-hopin' ever time he'll do better, an' more keerful-like, the same thing he done so neglectful the day afore.' The idea you sirgestin' more patience. The thing he needs, in my opinion, is more onpatience." (Josiah looks indignant and puffs vigorously on his cob pipe.)

BETSY. "I ain't a-blamin' you for Jeems K. Polk's shiftless ways, Josiah. You ain't no more to blame fur 'em then I is. But thur may be more in him then we think fur. The farm ain't suiten' to his natur' an'

he mought do better sumwhur else, a-workin' at sumfin more fitten to him."

JOSIAH. "What! you got thet notion in your head, too? Lettin' him go way frum home to new parts?"

BETSY. "Now, let me git through afore you begin to argerfy. It's just as hard an' harder on me to give him up as it is on you. He's all the boy we've got, an' we're gittin' old. You an' me didn't begin life as soon as sum folks, an' both them chillun is chillun uf our old age. An' thet's one reason we're so oncommon foolish 'bout 'm. I know jist how hard we've worked an' stinted to git this land paid fur, a-hopin' all the time to make a good farmer out'en Jeems K. Polk. But seein' he ain't a-takin' to our way o' thinkin' 'bout hisself, s'possen we try his'n an' let him see sumpin uf the world? Thur ain't no tellin', he mought be cut out fur sumpin great. I hev hearn that Andy Jackson an' Aby Lincoln both uv 'em wus jist as onlikely boys as he is."

JOSIAH. "Well, here he comes now, santerin' 'long, swingin' thet bucket an' chawin' them straws, with that onsatisfied, hankerin' look on his face." (Calling to James, who is on the outside): "Jeems K. Polk, why don't you come on here with thet bucket o' water? I'm dryer'n a powder horn, an' you air jist a-foolin' 'long chawin' straws like a ox."

JAMES (from the outside). "I'm a-comin', pa. I didn't know you wus in a hurry." (Enter James, a tall, awkward, well-built young boy, in whose expression there is more than average intellect. In his manner a restlessness born of discontent. He places the bucket of water on a side shelf.)

JOSIAH. "I reckon if I wus in a hurry I'd hev to go an' fetch it myself."

JAMES. "Say, Pa, I've jist been wonderin' why you didn't build this house down by the spring anyhow, then 'sted o' totin' water fur a quarter o' mile, you could jist step out an' hev it handy."

JOSIAH. "Thet's jist like you, Jeems K. Polk. You air allus' wantin' things handy 'stid 'er workin' fur 'em. I'd like to know how we could see the folks a-goin' 'long the big road if we'd a-put the house down by the spring, an' your Ma an' me thought we'd ruther hev sum society then so much convenience. Now, you'd never thought uv that till it wus too late." (After drinking from the old-fashioned gourd to his satisfaction, the old man dries his mouth on his blue cotton sleeve, relights his pipe and resumes his seat. James has seated himself on the edge of the floor of the passage, with his long legs, encased in their homespun cotton trousers, dangling in a most ungainly fashion from side to side. All the while Betsy continues knitting.)

JAMES. "Say, Pa, what you got to say 'bout lettin' me go to Westmorelan' to work in the company's big store?"

JOSIAH. "Well, Jeems K. Polk, we've been a-talkin', your Ma an' me, 'bout lettin' you hev your way, an' we've 'bout made up our minds to let you go an' look 'bout an' see if you reckon if you can do better then a-farmin'. I'll be bound you'll git 'nough an' be powerful glad to git back. A little homesickness is sumtimes good fur a fellow. I've knowd 'em to come home clean beat out by it."

BETSY. "Hush, here comes Lindy. You'll hev to break it to her gentle, fur she's plum set agin it."

(Enter Malinda, a pretty country girl. In her hand she has a bucket of fresh gathered potatoes, which she places on the floor, taking her seat in a chair.)

MALINDA. "Say, Pa, when I went out to dig them potatoes I found the old brindle cow in the garden jist raisin' Cain. Sum of you'ns bed lef the gate open, an' she tuck it fur a invite to tar up things in general."

BETSY (looking up from her knitting). "Jeems K. Polk, I'll be bound you lef that gate open when I sent you to git them cabbages."

MALINDA. "I reckon he did; he allus does. He's jist 'bout as fit'n fur farmin' as that old brindle herself." (She begins peeling the potatoes with much energy.)

BETSY. "Lindy, don't be too hard on Jeems K. Polk; you mought be sorry some day."

MALINDA. "La, Ma, you talks like Jeems K. had a notion of dying."

JOSIAH (removing his pipe). "Lindy, you ain't hearn, has you, as how Jeems K. Polk were goin' away?"

MALINDA (looking up in astonishment). "Goin' whur?"

JOSIAH. "To Westmorelan'."

MALINDA. "Whut fur?"

JOSIAH (with much sadness in his voice). "Your Ma and me has at last come round to his way uf lookin' at things. An' now he's goin'."

MALINDA (turning to James). "Jeems K., air you in earnest? I thought you wus jist a-talking to plague me when you kep on sayin' so much 'bout goin' away. I didn't think you'd hev the heart to do it. Who's goin' to help Pa an' him a-gettin' old? Who's goin' to tote the wood an' water, an' all sich? You wouldn't a got no sich notion in your head if you hadn't 'a kep on a-goin' over to Westmorelan' so much lately with that Billy Jones, sayin' you wus larnin' to trade. You wus jist a-hangin' 'round with them fellows, what thinks they knows so much, jist 'cause they war' store-bought clothes an' biled shirts ever' day in the week. I tole Pa all the time it were a-spiling you—an' now it's done come out."

JAMES. "Lindy, I'm mosten a man; I'm seventeen year old."

MALINDA (impatiently). "You ain't but one year older'n me."

JAMES. "Shucks, you're a gal, an' gals don't count."

MALINDA. "I reckon they counts fur 'nough to do more work 'round this here place than you does."

JAMES. "I want to make sumpin out'n myself. I hearn one uf the biggest men in Westmorelan' tellin' as how he come to town not knowin nothin', an' he jist went to work an' made a man out'n hisself. I'm goin' to do jist like that big man said he done. I'm going to work in the daytime an' git somebody to larn me at night."

MALINDA (sarcastically). "I'd like to know how you air going to live without sleepin'."

JAMES. "Shucks, Lindy, folks don't go to bed afore dark in town."

MALINDA. "No, an' they don't git up in the mornin', nuther. When them city folks wus a-campin' up there in the hollow, an' I took 'em butter an' milk long 'bout seven o'clock, they wus jist a-gittin' up, an talkin' 'bout it bein' early, when I'd done a good day's work afore goin'. You'll jist drap into them lazy, good-fur-nuthin' ways, fur you ain't none too fond uf work nohow." (Peels potatoes with increased energy.)

JAMES. "I reckon I kin hold my own. Billy Jones says I'm a natural-born trader, an' kin beat him any day, an' Pa knows I got more fur them cows an' pigs then he thought fur."

MALINDA. "I'd like to know what you air countin' on doin' when you git to Westmorelan'."

JAMES. "Dr. Watson says he'll git me a job in the company's big store, an' says I kin work my way up."

MALINDA (with contempt). "Or down."

JOSIAH. "Tut, tut, Lindy. Jeems K. Polk has been a good son an' brother 'ceptin' he ain't cut out fur a farmer. An' likely it ain't no fault uf his'n. He's goin' away now an' we'll miss him, you an' your Ma an' me. But if he makes a man out'n hisself we'll be proud an' glad he went. But,

Jeems K. Polk, if you come home to us in disgrace an' shame you'll break our hearts."

JAMES (with pride). "Pa, I mean to come back some day a rich man."

BETSY. "Jeems K. Polk, my boy, don't set your heart too much on gittin' rich. Be a great man if you kin, but whatever you do be a good'n. Don't never do nothin' thet you'd be 'shamed fur your Pa an' Lindy an' me to know 'bout. Don't never try to git the best uf nobody in a trade. Do jist what's squar an' hones', an' if you can't git rich bein' fa'r an' hones', jist be satisfied bein' pore but hones'."

JOSIAH. "An, Jeems K. Polk, jist allus remember what the preacher tole us 'bout them circus people bein' the sorcerers, in the Bible, an' the audiences bein' the idolaters, what wus burned in a lake uf fire an' brimstone. An' you stay 'way frum circurses an' all sich places. An' don't you go runnin' off after none of them Sasserresses. An' don't you go an' git mixed up with none of them adulterers; jist remember thur's a lake uf fire an' brimstone awaitin' fur all sich."

JAMES. "Pa, don't you know the powerfulest thing in the world is money? Why, them rich men over there in Westmorelan' does things whut we'ns would be slapped in jail for. They ain't skeered uf the law. Why, the jedge hissef is skeered uf them. Why, I hearn one uf the fellows tellin' as how when one uf them big rich men wanted somethin' done, he jist got on the train an' went an' tole the Gov'nor hissef' what to do. An' the Gov'nor jist done it. An' one uf 'em went to Washin'ton an' tole the Prisident who to p'int postmaster, an' the Prisident he p'inted him."

MALINDA. "Well, if you ain't got no more sense then to believe all thet, you'd better stay to home, fur sho' as you're born if you air thet green when you gits to town the cows'll eat you up."

JAMES. "It's you what's green not to know whut money does fur folks. I've seen 'nough to know thet money's the all-powerfulest thing in the world."

BETSY. "Jeems K. Polk, the Bible says it's harder fur a rich man to git to heaven then it is fur a camel to git through the eye uf a needle. Jedgin' from thet there won't be many rich folks up there."

MALINDA. "I reckon Jeems K. thinks all they's got to do is to walk up an' tell God A'mighty thet they's got money, an' God A'mighty will jist take off His hat to 'em."

BETSY. "Lindy, thur ain't no use uf all thet sputyfyin'. We'ns hed better go put on dinner." (Rolling up her knitting.)

MALINDA. "All right, Ma; these potatoes is ready." (Taking up the bucket. Exit Malinda and Betsy.)

JOSIAH (knocking the ashes out of his pipe). "Well, I reckon I'll go and feed the criters." Exit Josiah.

JAMES. "They don't know nothin' 'bout life 'cept farmin'. I know you can't be nothin' an' nobody if you ain't got money. An' I'm going to make money, an' I'm goin' to be sumpin."

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

Thirty Years Later. Present Time.

SCENE 1. (A handsomely furnished living room in the city home of James Nicholas, who has grown immensely rich and is living in great splendor, with his wife, Amanda, and only child, Lucile, who is just entering young womanhood. Amanda, a woman of forty-five or a little more, is walking the floor in a state of suppressed anger. Enter James.)

AMANDA. "James, that sister of your has taken it into her head to make us a visit. Think of it, and just at this time, too. We will be the laughing stock of the whole city."

JAMES (in blank astonishment). "Malinda coming to see us? Why, in all these years she has never seemed to have had any desire to do so. What do you suppose could have put such a notion in her head?"

AMANDA. "Lucile, of course. She has been corresponding with her constantly from abroad and since her return. And this morning she received a letter saying Malinda was coming. And Lucile has gone to the station to meet her. Oh, it is too much."

JAMES. "Gone to meet her? Then she is in town by this time, and will be here in a few minutes."

AMANDA. "Yes, at any moment, and what on earth are we going to do with Malinda day after tomorrow at Lucile's debut party, when the whole fashionable world is to be here? I told you years ago it was a great mistake to allow Lucile to keep in touch with Malinda. She could so easily have been kept away from that farm life, and now she would know nothing of your early surroundings, and Malinda would not be thrusting herself on us."

JAMES. "Amanda, I regret her coming as much as you possibly can. But what are we going to do that she has come without warning?"

AMANDA. "What are we going to do? That is just like a man. You have got to manage in some way to keep her in the background."

JAMES. "Oh, Lord! You don't know Malinda."

(Enter Lucile, accompanied by Malinda, who is dressed in a provincial costume, including a woollen shawl and poke-bonnet. Malinda is carrying carefully an old-time *carpet bag*. Lucile has in her hands a basket and a cotton umbrella. Malinda, who is gazing in utter astonishment at the grandeur of her surroundings, steps on to the highly polished floor, when her feet go from under her and she comes down with a thud on top of the carpet bag. The negro butler rushes from the hall, and, aided by Lucile, assists her to her feet, while James and Amanda stand looking on in utter disgust. As Malinda gains her feet she looks ruefully at her carpet bag, which the butler is picking up.)

LUCILE (evincing great concern). "Aunt Lindy, did it hurt you? Robert has polished this floor until no one will be able to stand on it.

MALINDA. "No, child, I ain't hurt; jist skeered a little; but it sarved me right. I had'n ought'r put *them eggs* in that bag. And jist to think, my *new bonnet* is in there on top up 'em, or I should say now all mixed up in 'em."

LUCILE (sympathetically). "Oh, that's too bad, but don't you worry. We can get another bonnet easily." (Turning to James.) "Father, here is Aunt Lindy."

JAMES (coming forward in a perfunctory manner). "Malinda, this is indeed a surprise."

MALINDA (throwing her arms about his neck, kissing him with much feeling). "Yes, Jeems K., I though I'd take you by surprise. Law, Jeems K., how you hev changed. Why, I wouldnt 've 'a knowed you. You air a real good-lookin' man. An' you look like you might be a great one, jist like a United States *Senitor*, what I saw not long 'go in Westmorelan'."

(In the meanwhile, Lucile has moved around to Amanda, to whom she speaks in an aside.)

LUCILE. "Mother, you must receive her kindly."

AMANDA (with a toss of her head advances). "How do you do, Malinda?" (extending her hand and in a most formal manner shakes hands).

MALINDA (somewhat abashed). "Well, howdy, Mandy. I reckon kissin' is gone out of fashion these days."

LUCILE. "Now, let me take your bonnet and shawl, Aunt Lindy (untying the bonnet and removing it, also the shawl). I have ordered some lunch brought in here for you."

(In the meanwhile Amanda had taken a seat and picked up some fancy work and James had thrown himself into a chair, looking uncomfortable.)

MALINDA. "No, thank you; I'll wait for dinner. It must be nigh twelve o'clock."

LUCILE. "But we do not have dinner until night" (as she removes her own hat and coat).

MALINDA (in astonishment). "Dinner at night! Then go to bed on a full stomach? No wonder you all look so down in the mouth. It's indigestion; that's what it is" (as she takes a seat).

AMANDA (with an effort). "Did you have a pleasant trip, Malinda?"

MALINDA. "Oh, yes, pretty fair, considering I was cramped up on a railroad train for six mortal hours."

JAMES. "What is Billy doing with himself these days."

MALINDA. "Ain't you hear'ed that Billy was a-running for a canidate for the Legislature? Yes, he's running, and he's going to get 'lected, too, for you know Billy's a pretty shifty sort of a fellow, and when he sets his head to a thing there ain't no stoppin' him."

JAMES. "What does he want to go to the Legislature for?"

MALINDA. "Well, Billy's got the notion in his head that he's cut out for somethin' great. Why, do you know Billy's a nateral-born oritator; an' his public prayers air the administration of the whole country. Why, Billy says so hisself. An', Jeems K., you know Billy give you your first lessons in tradin', an' him it was that put you on the road to prostitution; an' if the truth was tole, Jeems K., you owe every cent of your indebtedness to Billy" (said with great unction).

LUCILE. "And if Uncle Billy is elected, Aunt Lindy, will you come to the city while the Legislature is in session?"

MALINDA. "To be sure. You don't think I am goin' to desert Billy just 'cause he's got mixed up in politicks, do you? No, I took Billy fur better or worse, and I mean to stick to him."

LUCILE. "I am afraid you think politics rather demoralizing."

MALINDA. "Well, I know men in politicks an' out o' 'em, an' they are a pretty skitish set, an' it won't do to give 'em too much rope; if you do they are dead sure to hang theyselves. Why, Billy went over to Chattanooga to a convention meetin', an' he come home with a bright red cravat an' a big checked vest on. An' I jist tole him that whenever a man of his age got to warin' them kind of close, you'd better watch him. I said it in fun like, an' Billy semed to think it was a good joke. But sure as you air born, them's the signs. An' when a man gits 'em you'd better put on the

bridle, fur whenever an old family horse runs 'way he don't never stop 'till he tears things up."

LUCILE. "Which, Aunt Lindy, the man or the horse?"

MALINDA. "Both o' 'em. And I ain't goin' to let Billy git away from me. I see too much o' this effinity business in the papers to suit me."

LUCILE. "Then you take the papers?"

MALINDA. "Oh, yes. Billy is some educated, you know, an' he's great on readin'. An' awful proud of hearin' hisself read aloud. 'An' he practices all the time on me. An' when I am too busy, the old black cat seems to answer the purpose. An' really, Billy has learnt me a lot. Do you know, I used to make some awful blunders in talkin', but Billy allus kirects me, an' I'm glad uf it. But I do git somewhat put out sometimes when I'm in a hurry to tell a thing and he stops me to make me git my language right. Billy, he's a terrable fellow on languages. He set up o' nights studying the blue-back speller, an' the dictionary. But, Lucile, you ain't tole me a thing 'bout your party. Law, what a pitty I broke all them fresh eggs. They would'v come in so handy."

LUCILE. "Oh, it is just to be a big affair with all of father's and mother's friends and acquaintances invited, to whom I am expected to make my social bow."

MALINDA. "Well, don't think you air going to be shamed of me. I went over to Westmorelan' an' had a brand-new black silk dress made. I ain't had it on yet, but it's powerful fine looking. Nothin' would do Billy but that I had to have jist as good as anybody. An' he said it would come in handy when *we* go to the Legislater."

JAMES (rising). "Well, Malinda, I will see you later. I must be going to my office."

MALINDA. "You ain't goin' to work in them close, air you? Why, you're dressed up like you're going to a funeral."

JAMES. "My work, you know, is with my head. I do not have to soil my clothes."

MALINDA. "Well, it seems to hev been pretty profitable, jedgin' from the looks o' things."

JAMES. "Yes, Malinda, I have made something of a success in life."

MALINDA. "Well, Jeems K., I'm glad to see it. An' I'm proud of you. I never would hev believed it. When you left home you was 'bout as onlikely a fellow as I ever saw. But Ma allus believed you was cut out for somethin' different from what you was. An' Ma was pretty nigh allus right."

JAMES (turning to his wife). "Amanda, I should like to see you privately for a few moments." (Exit James and Amanda, by a side door. At the same time, a man between sixty and sixty-five appears at the hall door, unannounced. On his once handsome face there are the traces of dissipation. His bearing is that of the well-bred man of the world.)

LUCILE (advancing to meet him as he steps into the room). "Oh, Cousin William, I am so glad to see you."

THE CAPTAIN. "And I you, *little one*" (taking her hand and kissing it with old-time gallantry). "I came especially to take a look at you. Stand off and let me take you in. The same locks, around which the sunbeams play hide and seek. The same merry twinkle in your eye, which sets even an old man's heart in motion, turning his brain topsy-turvy, making him do and say foolish things. Now come nearer" (taking her face between his hands and looking earnestly into her eyes). "Let me look into the windows of your soul. Ah! the same pure fountain. Keep it so, my child; keep it so" (the last sentence said with much feeling).

LUCILE. "My, how serious you have grown. Come, be your own gay,

original self; anybody can be serious. I want you to meet Aunt Lindy." (Turning to Malinda.) "Aunt Linda, this is Captain Thornton, the Cousin William whom I used to quote so frequently."

(The Captain and Malinda shake hands cordially.)

CAPTAIN. "Mrs. Jones, I am delighted to meet you, whom I feel I have known for many years through Lucile."

MALINDA. "It looks like I ought to hev knowed you afore, being as you air Lucile's cousin, and I'm her nateral aunt."

THE CAPTAIN. "And I know we shall be friends, which is but natural, as we belong to the same family and have to begin with one subject, on which we will agree, Lucile, for I know you love her."

MALINDA. "Love her? Well, I should say I do. Why, that's what's brought me here now, an' I left my old man to home runnin' fur a canidate fur the Legislater."

THE CAPTAIN. "So your husband is a politician?"

MALINDA. "Well, he's a canidate."

(The butler appears with tray ladened with eatables and places it on the large table at one side of the stage. Then withdraws.)

LUCILE. "Come, Cousin William, and join Aunt Lindy at lunch. I shall do the honors. You know Aunt Lindy has just arrived and must be nearly starved by this time."

(They all three move up to the table.)

MALINDA. "Lucile, me an' the Captain is both home folks. We could jist hev gone to the kitchen an' got a bite to eat 'stid o' puttin' on all this style."

CAPTAIN. "Lucile is training that fancy negro, Mrs. Jones, and you and I are good material for her to practice on."

MALINDA (as Lucile is serving them from the tray). "Is thet so? Well, she's got that nigger so dressed up I don't see how he's goin' to 'tend to his business. Onct I tried that on Sam, our nigger, to home. You know he works on the farm. Billy had invited some of the canidates who was a-speakin' in Crabapple County, to our house to dinner. We had jist finished the new house, an' Billy was powerful proud of it. Billy said it wouldn't never do for me to wait on 'em at table. So we dressed Sam up in Billy's old close. They was some too big, bein' as Billy weighs nigh two hundred an' fifty pounds, an' Sam is a little nigger. But I thought the folk's have their backs to Sam. Your friend, Mr. Carroll, was a-stayin' to our house then, Lucile, an' he was awful polite, for when that nigger bumpted into his back, with the hot coffee pot, an' it run down his back, spilin' his collar, he jumped a little, but never said a word. An' Jedge Simpkins (he's a show 'nough jedge from Westmorelan'), when that nigger spilt the whole dish of turnip greens in his lap, he jist laughed like it was a joke. Billy says he's a show 'nough politican, too." (Lucile and the Captain are laughing very heartily. When the butler announces Mr. Carroll, Lucile leaves the Captain and Malinda eating and talking, as she advances to meet Percy.)

PERCY (with hand extended and a cordial smile on his face). "Well, how goes America with a young woman who has been around the world, seen the crowned heads of Europe, explored its old castles, and dreamed dreams, no doubt, of buying one of them along with its impoverished owner?"

LUCILE. "To a young woman who has not been cursed with hallucinations, which you dignify as dreams, America is still the greatest country in the world, and America's noblemen greater than kings."

PERCY. "Bravo! The same independent, well-balanced young woman foreshadowed in the red-headed, self-willed child."

LUCILE. "Will, you never forget that my head is red and my temper fiery?"

PERCY (laughing). "Oh, I beg pardon. I forgot how sensitive you used to be about your red hair."

LUCILE. "Yes, and still am. But here is Aunt Lindy" (as they turn to Malinda and the Captain) "from whom I have just learned that you and she are old acquaintances."

PERCY (going up to Malinda with the air of an old friend). "Well, Aunt Lindy, this is indeed an unexpected pleasure."

MALINDA (rising with her mouth full of bread, takes Percy's hand). "'Pon—my—word, Per-cy Car-roll—the sight o' you is good for the sore eyes. And you ain't got married yet?"

PERCY. "No, Aunt Linda, I have not found a woman yet who will agree to spoil me as you do Uncle Billy."

MALINDA. "Oh, go long with your foolishness. Didn't I tell you you'd lived single long 'nough, and if you didn't look out you'd git sot in your ways?"

THE CAPTAIN. "That is good advice, Percy; you'd better take it."

(The butler announces Mr. and Mrs. Gilroy. Enter Tom and Rose Gilroy.)

ROSE. "How is everybody?"

TOM. "Everybody here present seems to be having a good time."

LUCILE. "Only needing you two to make the occasion complete. Let me introduce to you my aunt, Mrs. Jones. Aunt Lindy, these are my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Gilroy.

MALINDA. "Proud to know you. Lucile's friends air all'us my friends." (They shake hands.)

ROSE. "Mrs. Jones, I feel that I have known you always, through Lucile and Mr. Carroll, but did not know you were here. When did you come?"

MALINDA. "Jist lit 'bout a hour ago. Jist been having a snack. Won't you have some?"

ROSE (suppressing a smile). "Thank you, no; we have just lunched."

TOM. "How did you leave Mr. Jones? I understand he is going to be elected to our next Legislature."

MALINDA. "Billy's pretty peart, an' he says he's shore to git there."

THE CAPTAIN. "Mrs. Jones, how does your husband stand on the tariff question?"

MALINDA. "Billy says he's for paying' the *durned* thing off, an' bein' done with it."

(Malinda, Percy and the Captain move off to the side of the stage, laughing and talking.)

ROSE. "Lucile, has Blanche Van Dyke been here? She left me more than an hour ago, with the excuse that she was coming to call on you."

LUCILE. "No, I have not seen her."

ROSE. "Have you ever met Blanche?"

LUCILE. "Not since I was a child. I thought then she was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. Is she still so beautiful?"

TOM (enthusiastically). "Yes, more so than ever. When she married that army officer and left here she was just a pretty girl. Now she comes back a howlingly beautiful widow."

THE CAPTAIN (from the side). "Who is this beauty you are howling over, Tom?"

LUCILE. "Come, Cousin William, and tell us what you think of Mrs. Van Dyke over whom Mr. Gilroy is growing eloquent."

ROSE. "Yes, howlingly so."

MALINDA. "Lucile, I'm goin' to step out an' take a look at the *observatory room*, to see your flowers."

LUCILE. "Very well, Aunt Lindy, make yourself at home." (Exit Malinda.) "Now, Cousin William, we are waiting for your opinion, for you are a judge of beauty."

CAPTAIN. "Now, there is a beauty for you. And no mistake about it. The kind of beauty which drives men crazy. I can well imagine that Helen of Troy looked like this when she turned the head of young Paris, captivated the whole of Troy and plunged nations into nine years of war. There is a dream in her eye, fascination in her smile, the ineffable charm of poetry itself in her movements."

(Enter Blanche and James.)

BLANCHE. "Oh, Captain, who is this unusual creature who has awakened in you a memory of the classics and the poet? Was she a daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair?"

THE CAPTAIN. "Yes, and her loveliness has frozen my swift speech with shame and surprise. She has great beauty. Ask thou not her name; but may she not be like the other, over whom men drew swords and died, for wherever she went she carried calamity."

BLANCHE (laughingly). "Well, Captain, fortunately the day when men draw swords over women is past. In this day and time one pretty face soon drives out the memory of another."

LUCILE (advancing). "Mrs. Van Dyke, I am glad to see you."

BLANCHE (extending her hand). "And this is Lucile, whom I have not seen since she was a little girl, with very original ideas, and a will of her own. And I dare say she does not remember me at all."

LUCILE. "Indeed, I do, and I can recall just how you looked, and the dream of my childish heart was to look and be like you. My favorite dolls were called Blanche Clark."

BLANCHE. "Oh, how interesting. That was genuine admiration."

PERCY. "Yes, Mrs. Van Dyke, you might call that demonstrated admiration."

(In the meantime James has been shaking hands cordially with all present except the Captain, whom he treats with great indifference. As James turns to rejoin Blanche.)

BLANCHE. "Do you know, Mr. Nicholas, I have found a former admirer in your charming daughter?"

JAMES. "How can she help it, Madam? None of us can resist your fascination."

BLANCHE (moving off with him). "Oh, you flatterer."

JAMES. "The truth is never flattery." (As they go over to the table on which wine and liquors are standing. James serves Blanche and helps himself. They remain thus talking.)

ROSE (enthusiastically). "Lucile, day after tomorrow, the day of the party, is almost here. Do tell us what you are going to wear. I know you will look dazzlingly beautiful in whatever it is."

LUCILE. "It's just a simple little white dress."

ROSE. "A simple little white dress? I know it's a Parisian creation, and I am dying to see it."

LUCILE. "And you shall. Here comes mother."

(Enter Amanda in stately dignity, greeting each guest.)

AMANDA. "Well, Percy, I am delighted to see you once more. Mr. Gilroy, and Rose, my dear, how are you both? Mrs. Van Dyke (with a most formal bow, as Blanche moves towards her). And, William, where have you been keeping yourself lately?"

BLANCHE. "Oh, Mrs. Nicholas, I have just been telling your husband how delighted and flattered I am at finding in this very charming daughter of yours an admirer. She tells me—"

AMANDA (cutting her short, with a significant look at James). "Indeed, it must run in the family."

BLANCHE (laughing, but somewhat abashed). "I hope so."

ROSE (aside to Percy). "Things are getting warm. We had better be going."

LUCILE (as if to make amends). "Yes, Mrs. Van Dyke, when I called my dolls for you I thought you were perfect, but I realize now that you have improved upon your then irresistible charm both of manner and appearance."

BLANCHE. "Thank you, my dear; a woman always appreciates a compliment from another woman more than one from a man."

ROSE. "Really, we must be going. I have an appointment, and, Blanche, I know you have."

BLANCHE. "Yes, I am late now, as usual."

THE CAPTAIN (in an aside to Blanche). "Look out, young woman; you are on dangerous ground."

(All say good-byes and leave the stage, laughing and talking. James and Amanda alone.)

JAMES (angrily). "What did you mean by your rudeness to Mrs. Van Dyke? Why, you were absolutely insulting, and in your own home."

AMANDA (equally angry). "Well, I meant to be insulting. Do you think I am going to be fool enough to allow any woman to come into my house and flirt with my husband right under my nose, without resenting it? No, too many men are finding their affinities these days. Old fools who have lived with their wives for twenty or twenty-five years are beginning to find out that they have just for the first time met an affinity. A soul that understands their souls."

JAMES. "Amanda, you are crazy. I was simply polite to Mrs. Van Dyke, who was a guest in the house."

AMANDA. "I suppose you have just been being polite to her for the last six months, calling on her at the hotel and riding out in her auto, and dangling at her beck and call, making a fool of yourself in general."

JAMES. "Who's been telling you all this stuff and nonsense?"

AMANDA. "No one has been telling me anything. Do you suppose I am such an idiot that I have to be told what everybody sees?"

JAMES. "What everybody sees?"

AMANDA. "Yes, this woman, with her wiles and strategy, is making a complete fool of you. Now, let me tell you once for all. When I married you I gave up an untarnished name, and I am not going to allow you to trail in the dust and mire the one borne by my daughter. But Blanche Van Dyke is not troubling me half as much as Malinda. I can get rid of Blanche, but what are you going to do with Malinda?"

JAMES (dropping into a chair). "The Lord only knows."

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE. (Library in the Nicholas home. The night of the ball. Percy Carroll and the Captain in evening dress.)

PERCY. "I came early and have just seen Lucile to tell her I have taken the liberty of bringing here tonight an uninvited guest."

CAPTAIN. "I am sure any friend of yours will be welcome. But who is it?"

PERCY. "A young man who has come to me under rather peculiar circumstances. It is a long story, Captain. Years ago, when I was a very young child, my father and mother had a friend who was as dear to them as an older brother. He nursed them through yellow fever and saved their lives, for he was a physician; but to them he became nurse also. He lived on his plantation, down in Louisiana, which adjoined my father's. Shortly after my father's recovery Dr. Watson left Louisiana and came somewhere here in Middle Tennessee, bringing with him a little granddaughter, all he had left in the world, for his wife and the parents of the infant had been swept away by the same scourge that came so nearly depriving me of my loved ones. Finally the old doctor drifted to Europe with the young girl, and my father lost sight of them. This young fellow is the son of the granddaughter, Caroline Watson. Both she and the old doctor died in Europe. A short while before the boy's mother died she instructed him to bring to me the private papers of Dr. Watson. Of course, I have no idea what their import may be, but I am bound by a sacred memory to do by this young fellow as if he were my own. A few days before my father's death he said to me: 'My son, the time may come when either Dr. Watson or Caroline will need your advice or help. If so, remember that you are bound to them by ties closer than blood—an obligation that you can never repay.' "

CAPTAIN. "I knew Dr. Watson and Caroline very well."

PERCY (in surprise). "You did? Where?"

CAPTAIN. "In Westmoreland; it was there that he located, feeling that he could never return to his desolated home. It was Dr. Watson who took an interest in Jim Nicholas when he came to Westmoreland, and to him Jim owes everything he is and has today. Dr. Watson secured for him a position and taught him everything in the world he knows."

PERCY. "You surprise me greatly; but Carroll evidently has never heard of Mr. Nicholas, for if he had I am sure he would have said so when I told him I was going to bring him here tonight. But how surprised and pleased Mr. Nicholas will be to meet *him!*"

CAPTAIN (significantly). "Well, I do not know about that."

PERCY. "What do you mean? Certainly a man must feel unspeakable gratitude for such service as that rendered by Dr. Watson to Mr. Nicholas."

CAPTAIN. "Percy, Jim Nicholas does not know the meaning of the term gratitude. His soul is so steeped in avarice that his daily prayer is: 'Oh, thou Almighty and Everlasting Dollar, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. Oh, thou Almighty Dollar, whose kingdom is everlasting power.' It was the influence of this Almighty Dollar which caused him to marry my cousin, Amanda Thornton, who had a few thousand in her own name, which Jim got possession of for the price of a marriage license. Now that he has reached his kingdom of everlasting power, by the accumulation of the Almighty Dollar, do you think he wants to be reminded of the time or the man who was in reality his maker, and ought to have stood to him as his savior?"

PERCY. "Perhaps not if all you say of him is true."

CAPTAIN (laying his hand on Percy's shoulder). "My friend, all I say is true, and more, I suspect, but of that I must be convinced before I impart, even to you, my mistrust of the man."

(Enter Lucile, attired in a girlish costume of white.)

LUCILE. "Cousin William and Mr. Percy, the two very people I was looking for. I want you to see Aunt Lindy. She looks perfectly lovely. But what a time I had getting her to submit to the ordeal of hair dressing, etc. I wish you could have heard her on the subject. But here she comes. Judge for yourselves. How dress transforms womankind!"

(Enter Malinda, dressed in a handsome black silk, quite up-to-date, with hair dressed in the latest style. A well-dressed, well-groomed, good-looking woman.

MALINDA. "Well, look at me. An' you never would'r knowed me if you had met me in the big road."

CAPTAIN. "Mrs. Jones, you are looking superb, and not a day over thirty. Lucile, what would your society friends give for such a complexion?"

LUCILE. "They would gladly give a fortune to acquire it."

PERCY. "Aunt Lindy, I am simply lost in admiration, and I wonder what Uncle Billy would say if he could see you."

MALINDA. "I reckon he'd be jist like the rest of you, tickled to death at the outside show of me. But I shorely do feel like an old fool. And what would the people in Crabapple County say, if they could see me now? Specially them girls in my Sunday School class, what I *beholdens* to on the sin of fancy dressin' ever Sunday. Lord, Lord, I can't never teach Sunday School no more; I'd be a plumb hypocrite, me what set up an' let that hair woman comb an' fix my head same as I was an imbecile, an' me a well, able-bodied woman. Lucile calls it *dressin'* my hair. Looks to me more like mussin' it. Then, couldn't nobody but Lucile have made such a gump out'n me. Jist look at these gloves. Now, what's the use keepin' on gloves in the house, I'd like to know. An' I'm so girted up in these close I jist know my ribs ain't never going back to their right place agin."

(Enter James and Amanda. The latter regally attired. James stops, talks to Percy. The Captain moves off to a mantel in the rear of the stage.)

MALINDA. "La, Mandy, you air worse lookin' than I am. Ain't you going to put nothin' over your shoulders?"

AMANDA (indignantly). "Of course not. In society we dress like ladies, and I think you brought your nerve with you to be criticising my dress."

MALINDA. "Ladies! Well, I reckon them that ain't ladies don't wear nothin'. And I know them what ain't in society is got better manners than some what air."

LUCILE. "Oh, you two are acting like bad children. I shall have to stand you both in corners and make you go without supper."

MALINDA. "Yes, Lucile. Sich doins is belittlin', an' I'm sorry, but I kinder lost my temper."

(Amanda turns from them in disgust and walks over to join the Captain, who seems lost in reverie.)

LUCILE (taking Malinda's arm). "Come with me. I want to show you the drawing room and the ball room before the guests begin to arrive." (Exit Lucile and Malinda.)

AMANDA. "William, what can be done to keep Malinda from making a show of herself and us tonight?"

CAPTAIN (with a start). "Malinda! Oh, yes, I see, Mrs. Jones; she will be a little out of the ordinary, won't she? In whom the society people

can find something of interest, thereby forgetting for the time being the boredom of their own existence."

AMANDA. "You talk as though we were offering her as one of the *features* of the evening. And in your cynical selfishness enjoying the situation, no doubt; but I tell you it's no laughing matter to me. And you, as my nearest kin, ought to feel the position in which we are placed; for, in spite of your affected Bohemianism, you are a Thornton, and must have some of the Thornton pride."

CAPTAIN. "Yes, I have a certain kind of pride, but it's the kind which says to the world I value people for what they are as individuals; not what circumstances and progenitors have done for them. And were I in your place I should accept Mrs. Jones, and in my treatment of her say to society, 'I appreciate this woman for her genuine worth, notwithstanding she has been denied the advantages of an early education, and knows nothing of the *wiles and deceits of a so-called higher social life.*' "

AMANDA. "Your position is absolutely untenable. To be made the laughing stock of the entire community for the pleasure of performing an heroic stunt, is a little out of my line."

CAPTAIN. "They may laugh at her, and will, no doubt; but your position, Amanda, will cause this selfsame inconsistent, incomprehensible world in which we live to hold you in utter contempt; for as prone as the old world is to ridicule, and as thoughtless as it seems, the only people in it who command its respect are the ones of independence and true merit. And the only ones who have outlived their day and generation have been those of freedom of thought and independence of action, and not all of them have been men of education, either." (While they continue in conversation.)

JAMES. "You say this young fellow is a great-grandson of Dr. Watson?"

PERCY. "Yes. After Dr. Watson left Westmoreland, where, as you know, he lived in very reduced circumstances, his affairs underwent almost a magical change. On some lands which had been considered worthless valuable minerals were found, and he sold out for several hundred thousand dollars. He then took his young granddaughter and went to live in Europe. Caroline perhaps married unfortunately, as the boy seems to know but little of his father."

JAMES. "What is the boy's name?"

PERCY. "Carroll Arnold. He was called for my father."

JAMES. "How old is he?"

PERCY. "About twenty, I suppose. I have not asked his age, but he is young, a mere boy."

JAMES (with a look of relief). "We shall be glad to know him. I knew his grandfather many years ago, and he was very kind to me when I was a young fellow struggling to make my way in the world."

PERCY. "So I have understood, Mr. Nicholas." (Said with a look of utter contempt on his face, and scorn in his voice. Turning to the Captain). "Captain, will you join me in the smoking room?"

CAPTAIN. "Certainly."

(Exit Percy and Captain.)

AMANDA. "James, we had better go into the drawing room; it is almost time the guests were arriving."

JAMES. "I will join you in a few moments."

(Exit Amanda as Lucile enters from an opposite door.)

LUCILE. "Father, I want to talk to you for a few moments about Aunt Lindy."

JAMES. "If you can suggest some way to get rid of her for tonight, at least, I will be glad to hear you."

LUCILE (in blank astonishment). "Get rid of her! Why, that is simply impossible! And I am shocked and hurt that *you* could suggest such a thing."

JAMES. "What in the world did you mean by inviting Malinda here, just at this time, without consulting either your mother or me?"

LUCILE (indignantly). "I did not invite her. I wrote her from the other side that you were going to celebrate in this way my return from a trip around the world. And she took it for granted that she would be a welcome guest in her own brother's house."

JAMES (somewhat disconcerted by Lucile's manner). "Well, at any other time I should have been glad to have her; but just now, to be made the butt of ridicule of the society world is too much. I can stand anything better than ridicule."

LUCILE. "Father, it is better to have the ridicule of society than its contempt, disdain and scorn. She is your sister. You were born of the same parents, lived amid the same environments. But you, being a man, could get out and create for yourself a place in the world, while she, a woman, had to accept the inevitable. And you are ashamed of her for this and no other cause? Oh, it is cowardly! I can not believe it of you. You who have been big enough to make a success in life, ought to be great enough to create or mold the little world around you." (With an entire change of manner, throwing her arms around his neck). "Oh, father, don't you see that this means more to me than hurting Aunt Lindy, unspeakably more than what the world will do or say. It means my respect, my admiration for you, you who have been my *hero*. Ever since I was old enough to know anything about the world, I have gloried in the fact that you were a *self-made man*, not a creature of circumstance. You are a man too big to yield to such a petty weakness."

JAMES (much moved). "You are right, my child; you are always right. And, Lucile, you are the one being in the world that I love over and above all things else. Yes, Malinda shall be one of us, and we will let the world say what it will."

(The music behind the scene.)

LUCILE. "How happy you have made me! I knew you were truly great. The musicians have started, the guests are evidently arriving; we must go into the drawing room."

(Exit James and Lucile.)

(Enter the Captain, quickly followed by Percy and Carroll Arnold.)

PERCY. "Captain Thornton, I want you to meet my young friend, Carroll Arnold."

CAPTAIN (extending his hand and speaking with much warmth of feeling). "Young man, I am glad to meet the descendant of your great-grandfather, one of God's noblemen. Your mother I loved as a little girl, and it makes me feel very old, indeed, to see a son of hers grown."

CARROLL. "Captain Thornton, you can not appreciate my feeling unless you have lived in a foreign land, and for the first time felt the cordial grasp of the hand of one who knew and loved those who were dearer than life to you."

CAPTAIN. "My dear boy, I am a lonely man in my native country, so much so that I can fully sympathize with you. Were you born in Europe?"

CARROLL. "Yes, and lived there all of my life, but I can not remember a time when I did not have a longing for America, strange as it may seem. But I suppose the real reason was my grandfather, who lived until I was 14, never tired of telling me of the greatness of this country."

CAPTAIN. "How long has your grandfather been dead?"

CARROLL. "Ten years. He lived to a great age, over ninety when he died."

CAPTAIN. "Then you are twenty-four now" (as he glances at Percy and then looks earnestly at Carroll).

PERCY. "You are older than I thought, Carroll. I told Mr. Nicholas that you could not be over twenty."

CARROLL. "Yes, every one takes me to be younger than I am, but I will be twenty-five my next birthday. And that is one thing that brought me to America. My grandfather stipulated in his will that not until then was I to come into the possesion of my estate, which is in the hands of a trust company in this country. And he also suggested to my mother that I consult you, Mr. Carroll, in regard to my future plans. So here I am."

CAPTAIN (looking intently at the boy). "Carroll, tell me of your mother. I left Westmoreland before she was grown. I remember her as a child of large dark eyes, with a wistful expression."

CARROLL. "My mother. Well, of course, I am a partial judge, but to me she was almost perfect. She was a woman of unusual intellect, utterly unselfish, her breadth and charity were superhuman. Her life work, her passion, was to save women, to shelter the young from temptation, and reclaim the fallen. And her success was marvelous. She had a way of reaching the hearts of women. But she was a sad woman. The loss of my father seemed to have thrown a deep shadow over her life, one she never came from under. I could never talk to her of him: the tears would come to her eyes and she would say to me: 'My son, there are sorrows in life too deep for utterance. In my heart there is a grave that I dare not open for fear of being consumed by an overwhelming grief.' And, Captain, her eyes never lost that wistful look. Indeed, it was at times pathetic, but she was beautiful. O, so beautiful."

CAPTAIN (placing his hand on Carroll's shoulder). "My boy, you have drawn a striking picture of a woman made perfect through suffering."

CARROLL. "Captain, did you know my father also?"

CAPTAIN (with sadness). "No, my boy, I did not."

(Enter Rose.)

ROSE. "Oh, you must, all of you, go into the drawing room and see Lucile introducing Mrs. Jones. She has taken a decisive step. And there she stands, true to her colors. There is absolute heroism in her manner and bearing, and woe betide the man or woman who jeers at 'Aunt Lindy.' O, how I admire her pluck, her courage."

PERCY. "So do I; there is something truly great in a young girl who can take such a stand on an occasion like this."

CAPTAIN. "And we in our conceit call women the weaker vessel. I tell you, it requires greater bravery to calmly meet and conquer a laughing world than to go forth to battle under the spur of excitement or the impulse of the moment."

(Enter Tom and Malinda.)

MALINDA (fanning vigorously). "Whew! how hot this house is, and talking agin that music, and all them people talkin' to once, and nobody list'nin' to nobody—is the most complexing thing I ever saw. And the way them women are dressed is sacrilegious."

ROSE. "We would infer, from that, Mrs. Jones, you do not approve of the decolettè gown."

MALINDA. "The what?"

CAPTAIN. "The dress, if you were speaking in Biblical langauge, you would call 'low and behold.'"

MALINDA. "Well, now, you'v hit it, Captain. An' thankful I am thet Billy Jones is to home, an' more'n likely is in bed, a-sleepin' the sleep of the virchus right now. Why, the way them women did flatter Jeems K.

Polk was enough to turn the milk of human kindness to clabber. An' he jist swallowed hook, bait an' all. An' I would like to hev tole some of 'em what I heard talkin' behind thur back, what I thought o' 'em, but on Lucile's responsibility I had to be polite. Specially that woman who said, 'It's strange, for *he* looks like he might 'ev been to the manner born.' Now, Jeems K. Polk was born in a respectable log house, an' his pa an' ma was duly married, an' I don't thank nobody to say such cutting remarks 'bout 'em. An', besides, it ain't polite nohow to be talkin' 'bout people in their own house. Why, in Crabapple County there ain't nobody but what is better mannered than that."

TOM. "In polite society, Mrs. Jones, people take liberties. They show their superior breeding by criticising their host and hostess; also each other."

MALINDA. "Polite fiddlesticks. I call it outlandish."

PERCY. "Come, Aunt Lindy, you and I will go and take a look at the enjoyment of society instead of railing at it." (Offers his arm, which Malinda accepts.)

MALINDA. "All right, Percy; that might be more like a Christian."

CAPTAIN. "Come on, Carroll. We'll join the Christian band, too."

CARROLL. "With pleasure." (Exit the four.)

ROSE. "What a picnic Mrs. Jones is; but I feel sorry for Lucile."

TOM. "So do I, but let's go and see the fun."

(Exit Tom and Rose, as James and Blanche enter from an opposite door.)

JAMES. "What a relief to get away from that throng, for a moment of real happiness." (Looking most tenderly at Blanche.)

BLANCHE (with coquetry). "Wouldn't you say the same thing to any other woman who happened to be with you?"

JAMES. "No, you know there is no other woman in the world that I love as I do you."

BLANCHE. "Hush" (looking around) "you might be overheard."

JAMES. "Come with me into the conservatory, where we can be alone."

BLANCHE. "This is imprudent."

JAMES. "Oh, every one has gone to the ball room. I must have you to myself for a little. Come or I will take you in my arms right here."

BLANCHE. "That is what I thought you were going to do once or twice in the drawing room from the look in your eyes. Don't you know people will see this? How often must I tell you that you must be more careful?"

JAMES. 'Blanche, I cannot help it; I am simply beside myself. Come, don't you see I cannot keep my hands off you." (Putting his arm around her and drawing her towards the conservatory door, through which they disappear.)

(Enter Lucile.)

LUCILE. "Oh, I must be alone for a moment" (dropping into a chair). "How I wish this night were ended. It was so different when I was a child in the country with dear Aunt Lindy. I could not realize what a show she would be among such people" (with a break in her voice). "And I have tried so hard to be brave, and indifferent to the laughter and jeers" (sobbing) "Oh, oh." (Hearing some one coming, she tries to control herself.)

(Enter Percy.)

PERCY. "What, in tears" (very tenderly). "Little girl, this will never do."

LUCILE (irritated). "I am not crying. I am tired."

PERCY. "Of course you are, but tell me, what's the trouble? You know you used to make a confidant of me. You and I have gotten over some rough places."

LUCILE (smiling). "Yes, I know I must have been a great bore when a child, for I went to you with all of my troubles."

PERCY. "You were never a bore, and you know it."

LUCILE (laughing). "But I did have a fiery temper, and my red head was always getting me into trouble. Do you remember the time I went to your office with that bottle of hair dye to confide in you my determination to dye it? And you treated the matter so seriously and read me a lecture."

PERCY. "As if it were yesterday, Lucile. I can see that little tot standing there with a mysterious looking parcel tucked under her arm, as she gazed earnestly into my face, with her dark eyes fairly snapping, and said, 'Mr. Percy, I want to tell you a secret. You won't tell, will you?' Then drawing confidingly near to me, she tragically announced, 'I am going to dye my hair.' And when I asked seriously why she wanted to dye that glorious hair she stamped her foot in irritation, as the tears of anger gathered in her eyes, and exclaimed: 'Oh, everybody calls it red, and I don't want to be red-headed.' And when asked what color she wanted she replied, emphatically, *'Black, coal black.'*"

(The butler passes through with a bottle of wine and two glasses. Goes into the conservatory.)

LUCILE. "Yes, and then you took that same bad little girl on your lap and told her in grave tones what a fright she would be with her head shaved."

PERCY. "And her utter astonishment when told it would grow out short red hair instead of those long silken curls. She then puckered her saucy little mouth and reluctantly said, 'Well, I guess I had better give you the bottle of hair dye.' And foreclosed all future temptation by suiting the action to the word."

LUCILE (laughing heartily). "What a good memory you have; that was years ago. I, too, can recall so vividly the whole scene. How seriously you treated the matter. Most people would have laughed at and ridiculed me."

PERCY. "Perhaps, but that was a real sorrow to the childish heart, realizing that I sympathized with it."

LUCILE. "Yes, my hair was a source of mortification, and your understanding, I think, it must have been, that caused me to go to you for consolation."

PERCY. "And you remember I told her I would keep that hair dye until she was grown, and then we would see if she still wanted to use it? Well, Lucile, I have the dye. Do you want it?

LUCILE (amused). "Oh, dear, no."

PERCY. "I knew the time would come when you could appreciate that crown of glory."

LUCILE (suddenly). "But what have you done with Aunt Lindy?"

PERCY. "I had completely forgotten her and my instructions. I left her with the Captain. Your mother sent me to find you and bring you back to the ball room."

LUCILE. "I am not going; I am going to remain here for a while. You go and tell mother I am engaged. Then, Mr. Percy, you come back; I want to talk to you."

PERCY. "I will deliver your message promptly, and return with a great deal of pleasure." (Exit Percy.)

(Lucile goes over to an oriel window, where she takes a seat, hidden from view by drapery.)

(Enter Blanche and James, from the conservatory. James with his arm about Blanche draws her violently to him, kisses her, still holding her to his breast.)

JAMES. "Great God, woman, do you know how I love you? I would barter my soul to possess *you*, to know that you were mine, body and soul. O, my darling, I am passing through the tortures of hell; I must have you, you shall be mine, my own. If you love me what is there to prevent? A woman has a perfect right to give herself, and a man to take, when they are all in all to each other. And by the only law that governs the universe—Love—we belong to each other. Blanche, darling, I am going to take you home tonight. Do you understand? And this time you are not going to evade me, as you have done."

BLANCHE (excitedly, pushing him away). "Hush, some one is coming."

(Enter the Captain.)

CAPTAIN. "Your wife is looking for you."

JAMES (somewhat confused). "Mrs. Van Dyke and I are on our way to join them in the ball room now."

BLANCHE. "Yes, won't you come with us, Captain?"

CAPTAIN (as he seats himself on a sofa, and motions Blanche to a seat beside him). "Thank you, I prefer entertaining you here for a few moments. We can join Mrs. Nicholas later."

JAMES (annoyed as Blanche takes the seat indicated). "I suppose I am dismissed?"

BLANCHE. "Of course. Married men must give way to bachelors in a case of this kind."

JAMES. "Your will is my pleasure." (Exit James.)

BLANCHE. "Now, Captain, out with it. I know you are going to read me a lecture and I deserve it. I know I was imprudent, but this house is stifling, and I wanted a breath of air."

CAPTAIN. "And Jim Nicholas wants somebody to kick him."

BLANCHE. "No, really, it was my fault. I think I proposed it, and while it was dreadfully thoughtless, I did not—"

CAPTAIN. "No, you did not propose it. You allowed yourself to be carried off of your feet by this fellow's avowed admiration and pretended love. That is the card he always plays; his true purposes would not allure a woman of your stamp."

BLANCHE. "O, Captain, you don't for a moment believe that Mr. Nicholas has been making love to me?"

CAPTAIN. "Blanche, I do not want you to tell me anything. Assuredly not an untruth. I simply want to tell you a few things." (Taking her hand and speaking very tenderly). "Little woman, I never loved but one woman in the world, and that woman was your *mother*. For her sake I am doing what I never did before—interfering in other peoples' business. Do you remember Old Titbottom's magic spectacles, through which he could read the hearts of all men, and which he sometimes regarded as a gift of the greatest value?" (Blanche nods her head.) "Well, I am going to slip those spectacles on you for a little while, just long enough to enable you to see one man as he really is."

(Percy comes to the door and looks in. Not seeing Lucile, he passes on.)

CAPTAIN. "Many years ago an old man came to live in the little city of Westmoreland. He was all alone in the world save a little granddaughter, a beautiful, happy-hearted child, whom the old man loved with a tenderness that beggars description. The old man became interested in a boy from the country who was without money, friends or education. He secured for this boy a position by which he could make a living, and in

the boy's leisure hours the old man gave himself up to teaching, drilling—in fact, educating him. The boy grew to be a man; he was now pretty well educated, and soon showed ability for money making. Shortly he married into one of the most prominent families in the country, a woman who had inherited some money. His success was assured. But what of the old man and the little granddaughter, who had grown into young womanhood, a girl of about seventeen. Can you imagine the old man's horror when he found, after this scoundrel had married that a short while before, he had ruined that child and left her with honor gone and life blighted?"

BLANCHE. "O, Captain, that is horrible. What became of the girl and the child, perhaps?"

CAPTAIN. "That you may learn later. But this is not all of this fellow's villainy. Do you remember to have heard of the suicide of Mrs. Turner, the beautiful wife of a man who was this villain's friend?"

BLANCHE. "Yes, I heard there was a great deal of mystery about her death."

CAPTAIN. "The mystery is this: She fell in love with Jim Nicholas. Later when he tired of the affair he calmly told her there was no use in making a fuss about it, as she alone would go under. That such was the law of society, a time-honored law of nature, a law that had existed since the dark ages, even before the coming of Christ; a law that has been accepted and ratified by every generation since. In other words, he considers woman the legitimate prey of man."

BLANCHE (in a reflective mood). "The woman killed herself. The world said it is better so; we have no sympathy for fallen women. It is unwise to even suggest that a fallen woman may redeem herself; the world will not have it so. And yet, the vicious man, who has played upon her weakness, by his tempting whispering, goes unscathed; indeed, is sometimes made a hero of." (Growing excited and rising.) "Oh, it is infamous, infamous!""

CAPTAIN. "Yes, my dear, this attitude of the world is most unjust. But why do women continue to be the playthings of men? For woman, in all her weakness, is the strongest force upon earth. Women are like the buildings of a great city, wherein there are holy temples at which men worship in calm peace. Also *dens* where men gamble away their souls. Is man set toward ambition, woman will unlock the inner soul and show him the road that leads to glory. Is he worn and weary, she has comfort in her breast. Is he fallen, she can lift him up. At her touch honor withers, locks open, and barriers fall. She is as infinite as the ocean, and variable as the heavens. And thus woman rules the world. Yet she is the *slave of man.*"

BLANCHE (with much intensity of feeling). "O, Captain, you have shown me unto myself. You have saved me from a fate worse than death. I was fascinated, yes, infatuated with the man. And I was standing on the brink of a bottomless pit. Oh, God, I thank thee."

CAPTAIN. "Yes, we can both thank him that I was not too late, for his victims have all been women of your stamp. He is afraid of the common woman, afraid of blackmail."

BLANCHE. "Take me away from here, take me home. I never want to see his face again."

CAPTAIN. "Go and get your wraps. I will meet you here in ten minutes." (Exit Blanche, followed by the Captain.)

(Lucile staggers from her place of concealment. White as death, feeling for a chair, falls into it in a swoon. Percy entering from the hall.)

PERCY. "Lucile, where have you been? I have been looking for you everywhere." (Stops at her side, startled and excitedly taking her hand). "Child, what is the matter? Oh, Lucile, speak to me. My God! What has happened, my darling?" (Presses a kiss upon her brow, then starts and draws back). "No, not thus. She has fainted. I must have help."

(He rushes to the door and to some one on the outside. "Call Mrs. Jones or Mrs. Gilroy quickly." (As he turns around he knocks over a chair, upsets a vase on the table, stumbles over a rug. Bending over Lucile he takes her hand.) "Will they never come? What on earth can I do?" (Turns again to the door.)

(Enter Rose and Malinda excited.)

ROSE. "What is the matter?" (Sees Lucile.) "Lucile, Lucile! Oh, what has happened to her?"

MALINDA (going up to Lucile). "She's got a faintin' fit. Come here, Percy Carroll. Lay her down on the floor. Don't you know 'nough to put people flat out when they faints?"

(Percy and Malinda lay Lucile on the floor. Rose rushes for water. Percy stands looking frightened and helpless. Malinda kneels by Lucile and, taking the water from Rose, begins to bathe her face.)

MALINDA. "Percy, go for a doctor. Ain't there none in the house?"

ROSE. "Yes, Dr. Blank, a homoepathic doctor."

MALINDA. "No, I don't want no homicede doctor. Sugar an' water may do for the *infantry*, but *adultery* needs something stronger." (As she continues bathing Lucile's face.)

(The Captain appears at the door, is startled, looks around, takes in the window and the confusion of the room, grasps the situation.)

CAPTAIN (aside). "My God, in trying to save a weak woman I have broken the heart of a strong one."

PERCY. "I will get a doctor." (Starts hurriedly to the door. Meets the Captain in overcoat and hat in hand.)

CAPTAIN. "What is the matter?"

PERCY. "I found Lucile here a moment ago in a dead faint. Am hurrying for a doctor." (Exit Percy.)

(Blanche appears at the door in wraps and furs. The Captain hurries her away. Rose has knelt by Lucile, and with Malinda is rubbing her hands.)

MALINDA. "She's better now. Lucile, darlin', you jist had a faintin' fit. An' no wonder; this house is odious with flowers."

(Lucile partially raises herself, and looks around in a startled and dazed manner. Then throws her arms around Malinda's neck and sobs hysterically.)

MALINDA (coddling her as she would a child). "Yes, honey, tell Aunt Lindy what's the matter."

LUCILE. "Oh, Aunt Lindy, take me away from here. Take me home with you, to the country—away from deceit, treachery and corruption."

(She clings to Malinda, sobbing as if her heart would break.)

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

Ten Days Later.

SCENE. (Law office of Carroll & Gilroy. Percy Carroll seated at a desk, surrounded by papers, his head resting on his hand, seemingly lost in thought, when Tom Gilroy enters with court records in hand.)

TOM. "Well, I got those cases put off, but for the life of me I can't see why we did not let that Miller trial at least come up; everything is ready."

PERCY. "Simply because I must give it my undivided attention, which I cannot do just at this time."

TOM. "Percy, what in the devil is the matter with you? For a week or ten days you have not been yourself."

PERCY. "No, perhaps not; I have the most harassing situation I ever encountered, and I do not know how to handle it without the Captain's aid, and he, as you know, is in no condition to assist me."

TOM. "No, he has been drunk ever since Lucile's party, and no one ever sees him in that condition."

PERCY. "The Captain is the gentleman even in his sprees. None of his most intimate friends ever saw him drunk, and yet we all know his habit."

TOM. "Shuts himself up with that negro George, who will lie like a cavalier for him. Tell you he is desperately ill, has rheumatism, out of his head from fever, anything; but you simply cannot see the Captain."

PERCY. "I believe I'll telephone George and find out what the prospect is of seeing him any time soon." (Going towards the 'phone.)

TOM. "Good idea."

PERCY (at the 'phone). "Give me 702. Hello, that you, George? How is the Captain? Mr. Carroll. I am glad to hear that. George, tell him that I am exceedingly anxious to see him. Hello, that you, Captain? I am glad to know you are better. Yes, it's most important. Young Arnold. All right. I'll be here. Good-bye." (Hangs up the receiver. Turning to Tom). "He's coming here, and, Tom, I am going to ask you to leave us alone for a while. This is a private matter of importance."

TOM. "All right. Have you heard from Lucile today?"

PERCY. "Yes, but she still refuses to see any one."

TOM. "So they told Rose last night. What can be the matter with her? Rose says she evidently received some sort of shock the night of the ball."

PERCY. "I don't know about that. I found her in a dead faint. It may have been that she was not well, and the excitement and the heat brought on a little sick spell."

TOM (sarcastically). "That is a most plausible construction to put upon the situation, and I know you believe every word of it. Lucile in a dead faint in the library, the Captain disappeared mysteriously with Blanche Van Dyke, then goes off on a ten days' drunk. Blanche without warning packs herself off to New York. Jim Nicholas looks like a man condemned to be hanged. Lucile shuts herself up in her room and sees no one but Aunt Lindy. And for once in her life Aunt Lindy is not talking."

PERCY. Shut up and keep your suspicions to yourself, or you'll set the whole town afire with scandal."

TOM. "All right, I'll go home and talk the matter over with Rose. She is one woman who can keep a still tongue in her head if necessary." (Going toward the door.)

PERCY. "It's more than you seem to be able to do."

TOM. "I forgive you, old boy; for it is the first time in our twenty

years' friendship I ever knew you to be cross and unreasonable. So long." (Exit Tom.)

PERCY (to himself). "I never realized before how provoking Tom can be." (Enter the Captain, showing by his appearance the effects of a hard spree.)

PERCY (rising and meeting him cordially). "I am so glad to see you. Take this easy chair. I hated to disturb you, but I have the most damnable piece of news to impart."

CAPTAIN (sinking into the chair). "I think I know its nature. Carroll Arnold is the son of Jim Nicholas, and you have been appointed the cheerful mission of imparting to the young fellow knowledge that may, yes, will, wreck his life."

PERCY (in utter astonishment). "What! You know this? How did you find it out?"

CAPTAIN. "I suspected it the moment I heard the boy's name. Few people knew that Caroline's name was Arnold, for Dr. Watson religiously kept it to himself. For some reason he did not like her father, and after the death of Arnold and his wife, who was Dr. Watson's daughter, he changed Caroline's name to Watson. She was then an infant, and never knew any other father or mother save the old doctor. I have no idea that Jim Nicholas ever knew her real name. Perhaps even you did not know it."

PERCY. "No, I did not. But can it be possible that Nicholas does not know the boy is his son?"

CAPTAIN. "No, he does not know it. I was talking to Amanda, but watching Jim, when you were telling him who Carroll was, and I saw first the start, and later the look of relief when you told his age."

PERCY. "My God, what a villain he is."

CAPTAIN. "Yes, he's that all right."

PERCY. "But, Captain, Dr. Watson has left it to my discretion whether or not to tell the boy."

CAPTAIN. "In that case do not tell him. I see no use in destroying the boy's faith in God and man, which it will do, when he loses faith in his mother and conceives contempt and hatred for his father. I have been through the torments of *hell* since I so unconsciously revealed to Lucile the true character of her despicable father."

PERCY (in horror). "You did what?"

CAPTAIN "My boy, didn't you guess the truth? The other night, in trying to save Blanche Van Dyke from that seducer's influence, I revealed him to her in his real colors, telling her of Caroline and the other woman whose lives and happiness he had destroyed, and Lucile was in the window behind the curtain and heard the whole story."

PERCY. "Great God. Poor Lucile! How she has been suffering and will continue to do so through this man's infamy."

CAPTAIN. "Yes, that is the worst thing about such villains. It is the innocent who suffer, while they go scot free."

PERCY. "I know of no one who will feel a thing like this as keenly as Lucile. She is proud, high-minded, sensitive. Poor child."

CAPTAIN. "And that I should have been the instrument of bringing it on her. I tell you it's hell and damnation. I had better have let Blanche go to the bottomless pit."

PERCY. "No, no. If you have saved one woman from such a fate, you have won an immortal crown." (Telephone rings.)

PERCY (taking down the receiver). "Hello." (A look of surprise comes over his face.) "Well, what is it? If you must see me, you will have to come here. No. As you please." (Hangs up the receiver.)

PERCY. "That was Nicholas, in that imperious manner of his, ordering me to come to his office."

CAPTAIN. "I judge from your reply that you declined the honor."

PERCY. "Yes, but he is coming here."

CAPTAIN (rising). "Well. I am going; he will be here in a moment or two, as he has only to drop two floors on the elevator. And I am in no condition to see him now. I am sorely tempted to choke the life out of him."

PERCY. "I should willingly throw him out of that window, if, by doing so, I could rid the world of his infamy."

CAPTAIN (going out). "Come over to my rooms as soon as you can get away from here."

PERCY. "All right." (Exit the Captain. Percy turns and walks to the window. Stands looking out when James Nicholas enters.)

JAMES. "I met that very worthy cousin of my wife's out there in the hall. I suppose he has concluded not to drink himself to death yet awhile, but will hang around a little longer. It's a pity such men do not take themselves out of the world by a shorter route."

(There is anger in Percy's voice and contempt in his manner as James concludes, but he makes a desperate effort at self-control.)

PERCY. "A man may drink whisky and at the same time retain his honor and integrity."

JAMES. "Yes, but it seems rather late in life for Thornton to enter the field as a reformer."

PERCY. "To what do you refer?"

JAMES. "I suppose he has told you of his sudden awakening to a sense of virtue, which prompted him to indulge in a lot of sentimental rot in regard to Blanche Van Dyke, as though she were an innocent child instead of an experienced woman of the world and thoroughly capable of taking care of herself."

PERCY. "A weak woman is never capable of taking care of herself."

JAMES. "Yes, but I notice it is only old men, when they have outgrown the pleasure of life, who feel called upon to constitute themselves the guardians of women."

PERCY. "Unfortunately, to a certain extent, that is true. But there are plenty of men who would not attempt to corrupt a woman's virtue. And there are a few men in the world who believe the moral standard should be the same for men and women."

JAMES. "You certainly have more sense than to advocate such a doctrine. You know it is absurd. That there should be a difference between the sexes is an established law of nature." (Lucile and Malinda appear at the door and stand as if spellbound). "God intended that it should be so. He made man the stronger and intended that he should dominate woman, and legislate laws of his own—"

(Percy growing angrier all the while.)

PERCY. "What do you know of God? You who have betrayed every trust, from that of an old man, who stood to you as a savior, to the young, innocent girl whom you threw off to become, for all you knew, an outcast, at the same time the mother of your child. When a man of your stamp takes the name of God on his lips to twist and distort his great purposes to suit his own base lusts he ought to be struck dead."

JAMES (in great rage starts towards him). "How dare you?" (Lucile steps into the room, followed by Malinda.)

LUCILE. "Father."

JAMES AND PERCY (start violently and exclaim simultaneously). "Lucile."

JAMES (greatly excited). "What are you doing here? This is no place for a young girl. Go home at once."

LUCILE. "From what I have seen and heard within the last few days, this world is no place for women of any age. They seem to have been created solely for man's base purposes."

JAMES (in alarm). "Lucile, you are mad. What do you know of evil in life? You who have been so tenderly sheltered, protected from every ill. From your infancy I have showered upon you every luxury, humored your every whim. And, O, my child, I have loved you with an idolatrous love. Lucile, my child, my baby, come home with me." (As he draws near her.)

Carroll Arnold appears at the door.

LUCILE (repulsing him). "Do not touch me. In your touch there is pollution. Yes, you have humored me, you have showered upon me money. But what of that other child? What of Caroline Watson and her helpless baby, that you left in dishonor, that you might marry my mother, with her few paltry thousands? Where is Caroline Watson? Where is her child?"

Malinda has dropped, sobbing, into a chair, while Percy stands as if petrified. And James is trembling with fear and cowardice. Carroll rushes into the room.

CARROLL. "O, Mr. Carroll, tell me that this is not true. My mother! O, God, my mother!" (Sobs.)

Percy pulling himself together. Lucile stops as if turned to stone.

PERCY. "Carroll, my poor boy" (going up and putting his arm on his shoulder), "may God help you."

CARROLL. "Then it is true. That miserable coward standing there is my father. That infamous villain ruined my mother." (Starts towards James.) "Then, by the eternal God, this world can not hold both of us." (He springs at James and catches him by the throat and chokes him. Percy springs at Carroll and loosens his hold.)

PERCY. "Carroll, you know not what you are doing." (Carroll struggles for a moment, then desists, as James staggers back and falls into a chair, groaning piteously.)

CARROLL. "No, that is not the way—but he has got to meet me, and God shall judge which of the two is best fitted to live."

Malinda springs to her feet during the excitement.

MALINDA. "Look at Jeems K. Oh, what is the matter with him?" (They all turn to him. His eyes have taken on a glazed look. His face is blank. His mind gone. He does not speak or seem to see any of them.)

LUCILE (going to him). "Father, father! What is it? Oh, what have I done?" (Wringing her hands.)

MALINDA (taking hold of him). Jeems K., don't you know me? Don't you know Lindy and Lucile, your own sister an' little girl? Speak to me, Jeems K. Oh, it's the work of God. No man could'r done it."

LUCILE (throwing herself down by his chair). "Father, Oh, father, forgive me."

PERCY (bending over him). "Mr. Nicholas, Mr. Nicholas. His mind is gone." (All the while Carroll stands looking on with no emotion except that of hatred written on his face.)

LUCILE. "Oh, God, my punishment is greater than I can bear." (As Percy stands over her trying to comfort, Malinda puts her arm about her and lifts her to her feet.)

MALINDA. "Come with me, baby. You cannot answer God when he steps in an' takes charge of things."

CURTAIN.

ACT V.

Six Months Later.

SCENE. (Same as first—living room in Nicholas home.)

ROSE. "Isn't this world a place of rapid changes? Six months ago today Lucile made her debut with the promise of brilliant social success."

TOM. "Yes, and on that eventful night, something happened; I don't suppose we will ever know what, but it changed her, in the twinkling of an eye, from a light-hearted girl into a thoughtful, serious woman. Ten days later, without warning, Jim Nicholas, the financial king of his little world, became a hopeless imbecile."

ROSE. "It is all so mysterious. I can't understand it."

TOM. "Well, Jim's condition is easily accounted for. He had been burning the candle at both ends for twenty-five years or more."

ROSE. "Was he really as bad as people now say he was?"

TOM. "He couldn't have been much worse, and everybody knew it, but he was a power in money matters. Although nobody knew just how his fortune was amassed and many were the surmises and speculations, also accusations of fraud, deceit and corruption, he had the money, and that is what counts. Consequently his doubtful methods went unquestioned, and his affairs with women scarcely produced a ripple. I am not worrying over Jim Nicholas; he got about what was coming to him. But Percy Carroll is puzzling me. From the most even-tempered, well-balanced man in the world he has developel into one of irritability of temper and as restless as a woman in love."

ROSE. "Young Arnold is giving Mr. Percy a great deal of trouble. I was never so disappointed in a young fellow in my life. When he first came here I thought I had never seen a sweeter face or met with a more genial nature. Now he is drinking nearly all the while and is dreadfully morose; in fact, at times acts like he is insane."

TOM. "Yes, he is off on another spree now, and while that of course is troubling Percy, on account of his friendship for the boy's family, that in itself is not sufficient to upset him as he is. Percy knows how to meet responsibility, without losing his poise. But lately—well, he is just not himself and I do not understand it."

ROSE. "I think the solution to that is—*he is in love.*"

TOM. "In *love?* That is just like a woman. Let a fellow get out of sorts, it may be his stomach, liver or any vital organ, but she puts it down as love. Now, I daresay you think that Blanche Van Dyke's sudden departure for New York, leaving the general public connecting her name with that of Jim Nicholas, has upset Percy because people were foolish enough to believe that he was in love with her before her marriage."

ROSE. "Not so fast. Who is connecting Percy with Blanche? No one but you that I know of. You, in your anxiety about him, have been afraid that such might be the case. And, just like a man, you refute the charge before it is made."

TOM. "Then, in heaven's name, who do you think he is in love with?"

ROSE. "Lucile, and if you were not as blind as a mole you could have seen it for some time."

TOM (in utter astonishment). "Lucile! Oh, that is ridiculous. She—" (Enter Amanda.)

AMANDA. "I am sorry to have kept you waiting, but since Lucile has

taken up these absurd philanthropic ideas of hers we have so little social life that I am not always ready to see company."

ROSE. "Where is Lucile."

AMANDA. "She went off early this morning to the Home for Young Women. You know that is her hobby now. And she is riding it with might and main."

TOM. "She seems to have lost all interest in society."

AMANDA. "Yes, I cannot get her to go anywhere since her father's affliction." (Whispering.) "Of course James' condition is harder on me than it is on Lucile. I can scarcely stand to be where he is, it affects me so painfully, but I feel we owe it to ourselves and our friends to make an effort to be cheerful."

ROSE (sympatheticaly). "How is Mr. Nicholas?"

AMANDA. "There is no change in him; the doctors say he will never, perhaps, be any better, but will in all probability live for years. Oh, it's dreadful, for a man to be cut down in this way. And James was never sick in his life." (Enter Lucile.)

LUCILE. "Good morning, Mr. Gilroy, and Rose" (shaking hands), "I am so glad to see you. I have had such a busy morning."

ROSE. "You seem to be kept pretty busy all the while with your Young Woman's Home. How is it getting along?"

LUCILE. "Splendidly. We had a contribution yesterday of five thousand dollars. Isn't that fine? And so many people are becoming interested in the work."

TOM. "You are doing a great work, and I believe you really enjoy it more than society."

LUCILE. "There is no comparison. It is perfectly glorious to feel that you are doing something for others."

AMANDA. "It is most unsatisfactory to find that after you have spent yourself and money in trying to help people, how little appreciation they have."

LUCILE. "Oh, mother, if you could just see the change in some of those girls you would ask for no greater compensation. Girls who came there careworn and haggard go out to work with bright, happy faces and return eagerly in the evening to a good, comfortable home. We have now thirty working girls who can live sheltered and protected lives."

ROSE. "It is a great work, and women of money can do a great deal in that direction, but it requires money."

LUCILE. "Yes, it requires money, but unfortunately few women of means are interested, they have so many other things to do with their money. Why, the other day I asked a young woman to help us, one who spends unlimited money on herself, and her reply was that she could not afford it. And you ought to have seen her face when I suggested that she might deny herself one costume during the season, the price of which would keep a poor girl in the home for a year."

AMANDA. "Lucile, I think it was exceedingly impertinent in you to take such a liberty."

LUCILE. "She looked like she thought so, too, mother. And her manner could not have been more offensive if I had insulted her." (Enter the Captain.)

CAPTAIN. "Good morning."

ALL. "Good morning. Howdy do, Captain," etc.

AMANDA. "William, have you seen Percy Carroll this morning?" He promised to come here and go over some papers for me."

CAPTAIN. "Yes, he told me he would be here after a while. He has been pretty busy."

FEB 27 191

TOM. "Not in his office. I have scarcely seen him for days."

AMANDA. "Do you know, I think Percy is upset over Blanche Van Dyke's going away. They said he was madly in love with her before her marriage."

(Tom looks at Rose. The Captain is covertly watching Lucile, who starts, then turns away to hide her emotion.)

TOM. "Why is it you women always have to get a fellow in love? Now, Rose—" (Suddenly remembering himself, he stops, confused.)

ROSE (aside to Tom). "Has sense enough to keep her own counsel in public."

CAPTAIN (still watching Lucile). "Well, Blanche is a very attractive woman. But here comes Percy." (Enter Percy.)

PERCY. "Good morning."

ALL. "Good morning." (Lucile remains standing with her hand on the mantel. As she returns his salutation and while Percy looks intently at her, she seems very indifferent.

PERCY. "Mrs. Nicholas, you must pardon me. I could not get here any sooner."

AMANDA. "You have not inconvenienced me in the least. I want to see William privately for a few moments. Then you may join us in the library. William, can you go with me now?"

CAPTAIN. "Certainly." (Exit Amanda and the Captain.)

ROSE. "Tom, we must be going." (She joins Lucile, and they begin to converse.)

TOM. "Yes, I will be with you in a moment." (Turning to Percy.) "Is young Arnold off again?"

PERCY. "Yes, I was up with him all night, and the doctor has just succeeded in getting him quiet and to sleep under the influence of a drug."

TOM. "Do you think the fellow's mind is affected, or is it simply whisky?"

PERCY. "His mind is undoubtedly unbalanced. I think the whisky drinking is more the result of his mental condition, but of course it makes him worse."

TOM. "What are you going to do with him?"

PERCY. "We will have to put him in a sanitarium for treatment. I have been talking to the Captain about it this morning."

ROSE. "Come on, Tom."

TOM. "Will see you later, Percy. So long. Good-bye, Lucile; Rose is always in a hurry."

LUCILE. "Good-bye, Mr. Gilroy. You ought to discipline Rose."

TOM. "I have never been able to get the whip handle away from her." (Exit Tom and Rose.)

PERCY (approaching Lucile). "Did you get my flowers this morning? I was so sorry I could not join you, but it was utterly impossible."

LUCILE (with unnatural manner). "Yes, I got the flowers."

PERCY. "Lucile, what is the matter?" (Anxiously.) "Something has gone wrong. I felt it the moment I entered the room. You are not yourself this morning. Won't you tell me what it is?"

LUCILE (petulantly). "Nothing has gone wrong. I suppose I am just a red-headed, bad-tempered *child*."

PERCY. "You are a very beautiful woman and in my opinion almost perfect."

LUCILE (with increased irritation, almost in tears). "No, you look upon me as a mere child, and treat me as you would a badly spoiled one. I am no longer a child."

(Taking her hand, which she tries to pull away, but he holds it firmly.)

PERCY. "No, you are a woman, but just now rather an unreasonable one. You are evidently angry, and with me. Now, won't you tell me the cause? Perhaps I may be able to right matters."

LUCILE (in tearful voice). "That is just the way you used to talk to

me when I was a child (with rising anger). "You do not talk to Mrs. Van Dyke that way."

PERCY (in astonishment). "Mrs. Van Dyke?" (Lucile nods her head. Percy's face brightens perceptibly.) "Lucile, is it possible you can be jealous of Blanche Van Dyke?"

LUCILE (in anger). "No I am not jealous. Why should I care anything about what you think of Blanche Van Dyke?"

(Kissing her hand in rapture.)

PERCY. "Lucile, tell me that I may hope that you can love me thus; that you can be jealous of another. Oh, my darling, I have struggled with myself days and nights, scarcely daring to hope, and too much of a coward to put it to the test. Lucile, never did man love woman as I do you. May I tell you so?"

LUCILE (looking shyly up at him). "That's what I've been waiting for."

(Catching her in his arms and drawing her tenderly to him.)

PERCY. "My darling, I have been telling you, by my every action, for years, that I loved you. Lucile, I have loved you ever since you were a little child. Your baby face, your little fingers when you used to nestle close to me, unlocked a secret corner of my heart that no woman ever touched before nor since. And the memory of your dear little voice, as you used to say, 'Mr. Percy, I can trust you,' has stood between me and temptation oftener than you will ever know. My darling, you are the one and only love of my life."

LUCILE. "Do you love me better than you did Blanche?"

PERCY. "I never loved Blanche. I never told her so. I have never loved any woman but you. You are the first and will be the last. Are you satisfied?"

LUCILE. "Yes."

PERCY. "And you love me?"

LUCILE. "With all my heart."

PERCY. "And will you be my wife?"

LUCILE. "Yes."

Imprinting a long and loving kiss, her arms steal about his neck.

PERCY. "My wife. I wonder, little one, if you realize what this means to me? My darling, my own. More than all else in the world. Indeed, you are my world in which my whole being is centered." (Kisses her again and again.)

LUCILE. "Your arm about me and your kisses on my lips has awakened in my soul a joy unspeakable. Oh, I am so happy." (As she nestles closer to him and her head sinks on his breast.)

PERCY. "My darling, my wife. You have made me the happiest man on earth."

The Captain appears at the door.

CAPTAIN. "Well, you look it. But old men are deaf and blind, so don't mind me."

(Lucile in confusion tries to pull away, but with his arm still about her Percy turns to the Captain, smiling.)

PERCY. "Captain, congratulate me. Lucile has promised to be my wife."

CAPTAIN. "With my whole heart, I congratulate you both." (Taking a hand of each, and placing that of Lucile's in Percy's, very earnestly. "Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder. And you, my children, have renewed my faith in the old adage, that marriages are made in heaven. And now, Lucile, I, too, must claim a kiss." (Kisses her.) "I am sorry to interrupt you, Percy, but Amanda is impatiently awaiting you in the library."

PERCY. "Yes, I will go now, but I shall return shortly. You will be here?" (The last directed at Lucile.)

LUCILE. "Yes."

PERCY. "And I am going to tell your mother."

Lucile. "Certainly."

Captain. "I have my back turned; you can kiss her and go along."

Percy. "Thanks, Captain." (Slipping his arm around Lucile, kisses her, whispers.) "Sweetheart." (Exit Percy.)

Captain (with his back still turned to Lucile). "All over? May I look?"

Lucile (still looking after Percy). "You are a humbug. (Turning to him.) "But come and sit down here by me." (They take seats.)

Captain. "Now, tell me, how did you manage it?"

Lucile. "Manage what?"

Captain. "To make Percy propose?"

Lucile. "Oh, he didn't require much urging."

(Malinda appears at the open door with umbrella in hand. To the butler in the hall.)

Malinda. "Here, Robert, take this umbrella and leave it on the outside; it's wet an' I can't pack it in here. Good-day." (Shaking her skirts as she enters. Lucile goes forward and kisses her."

Captain. "Good morning, Mrs. Jones? Is it raining?"

Malinda. "Well, it wus, but it's deceased now. My, what a time I'v had in gitten here. I'v stood on the corner fur a haf hour watchin' thim cars go *pro* an' *con* befor th' right one come 'long. I could'r walked, but the streets air perfect lullabies."

Lucile. "How is Uncle Billy? Still busy in the Legislature?"

Malinda. 'Billy's pert 'nough, but thim asinine dooties of that Legislater is too much for him. Why, he talks in his sleep 'bout bein' laid on the table, cau-cuss-in, a'journeying, an' all sich things."

Captain. "Well, it will soon be over; I believe they are to adjourn in a few days."

Malinda. "An' glad I am. We'll git out of that hotel an' back to home, where we'll know what we're eatin'. I'd ruther be out feedin' my turkeys an' chickens any day 'stid of settin' up in Sunday close an' hearin' people talk 'bout people what I don't know nothin' 'bout. I'v got 'nough hotel to do me the rest of my days. Lucile, how's Jeems K.?"

Lucile. "Father is just the same. You know there is little change in him from day to day, but here he comes now." (A negro man wheeling James in an invalid chair enters. James' face is blank and his eyes staring; he mumbles incoherently and fumbles aimlessly with his hands. Lucile goes over to him and adjusts his cushions, arranges his collar, smooths his hair, etc. James looks up at her and begins to mumble and cry. Lucile reaches for a toy and gives it to him. He takes it and begins to play with it. She turns away with a deep sigh).

Lucile. "How pitiful. If anybody had told me a year ago that I could go through with this I would not have believed it."

Malinda. "You air young, Lucile, an' young folks can throw off trouble. I never thought the time would come when I could thank God that he had took Pa and Ma away from me, but I do. I thank him ever day. This would'er broke their dear old hearts. An' they died so happy an' proud of Jeems K. Jist to think it ain't no use to speak to him, he don'e even know me." (She wipes her eyes.)

James begins to cry again. Lucile goes to him.

Lucile. "I wonder what he wants? Get some water, Robert. Perhaps that is it."

Robert. "He has had water, ma'am, jist before I brought him in. He's been powerful restless all day. I'd better wheel him; that quiets him some."

Lucile. "It is about time for his nourishment. Take him in the dining room and try that, and if he is still restless let me know."

Robert. "Yes, ma'am." (Exit Robert, rolling the chair.)

Captain. "Lucile, I will go and look after him."

Lucile. "Thank you, Cousin William." (Exit the Captain.)

MALINDA (looking sorrowfully after them). "Lucile, I wish I could help you, but I don't know what to do."

LUCILE. "There is nothing you can do, dear. We simply have to guess at his wants, and Robert is good and faithful."

MALINDA. "Lucile, you shore air good to him."

LUCILE. "Aunt Lindy, I am simply doing my duty. It is a great sorrow to me that I cannot love father as I used to. I feel that I am so dreadfully wicked and hard-hearted, but when my respect died my love seemed to die with it. Today, even, when I have been so happy, at the thought of his double life, something seems to clutch me right here" (placing her hand over her heart), "and a feeling of oppression comes over me that is sickening and overwhelming and thus it is all the while."

MALINDA. "An' I reckon lots a' daughters would feel the same way, if they knowed their fathers. Of course it 'tain't no comfort; but this air a wicked world. An' men ain't held to account 'nough. I ain't got no patience with this thing of there bein' one law for men an' somethin' different for women. God didn't turn Eve out of the Garden of Eden an' tell Adam he was excused. If there wus the same doctrines held 'bout men what goes wrong as we has for women, the men wouldn't be so keerless 'bout their care-*act*-tors."

LUCILE. "Yes, this thing of there being one moral standard for woman and another for man makes me sick."

MALINDA. "Honey, men ain't got no moral standin', it's all for the women folks. Why, them same men what spends their lives sinnin' agin women, is the most parsimonious when it comes to pickin' a wife. Nothin' won't do them but the most vurtuous of women, an', strange to say, the vurtuous women takes 'em."

LUCILE. "Aunt Lindy, I have a surprise for you."

MALINDA. "It'll take somethin' powerful uncommon to shake me up after all the curius an' strange things I'v saw an' hearn lately."

LUCILE. "I am going to be married."

MALINDA. "Good Lord! Who to?"

LUCILE. "Mr. Percy."

MALINDA. "What! Percy Carroll? Well, I did think that was one spiritous friendship. Who would 'er thought that he was thinkin' of gittin' spliced to you all this time? Why, Lucile, he's too old for you. He is—" (Lucile throws her arms around her neck and kisses her.)

LUCILE. "No, he is not too old, either. And I *love* him. I love him. Oh, I love him dearly."

MALINDA. "Well, that's all what counts, an' if you love him that way I reckon a few years don't make no difference. An' he is a good man, an you might go further an' do worser."

LUCILE. "If I looked the wide world over I could not find a man who so exactly suited my ideal. Why, Aunt Lindy, I do not believe he has a fault."

MALINDA. "Oh, go 'long with your foolishness; he's got faults, an' plenty uf 'em. You ain't huntin' fur no perfect man, fur if you wus to happen to run cross one he'd find this world a mighty lonesome place. An' I don't want you to be disapinted in your married life. Now, you lis'en to me. Don't you go an git married thinkin' that Percy Carroll is jist a little god. He's a man. An' when he sets down to eat, if the biscuits ain't hot, an' the coffee is cold an' weak, an' the meat is tough, if he swears a little don't you go off an' cry an' git the notion in your head that you'v married a brute. You jist remember you'v married a man, that's all. An' if he wants to read the newspaper in his shirtsleeves so as to be comfortable sometimes, even to smoke his old pipe in the house, don't you go an' raise a rumpus 'bout smellin' up the house, an' looking onstylish. You jist let him lone, an' air out when he's gone. But when he's to home you jist make him comfortable, an' feed him well, an' make yourself agreeable an' look pretty, an' he'll never find out that you ain't a angel; but if you go to sloppin' round the house an' naggin him 'bout little things an'

FEB 27 191

givin' him vituals what he can't eat, he may go loppin' off down the road after some other woman what ain't so vurtuous maybe, but is more agreeable, fur them's men's ways all over."

LUCILE (laughing). "Oh, Aunt Lindy, if all men are so material as that I shall see to it that we always have a good cook in the kitchen."

MALINDA. "Well, you'd better, fur I tell you the cook is the most fluent piece of furniture 'bout a man's home, but I'd better git to darnin' them stockin's fur you."

LUCILE. "What a dear you are. You will find a basket full, up in my room waiting for you."

MALINDA. "H'm. Who's goin' to darn Percy's socks, I'd like to know."

LUCILE. "Oh, I'm going to take some lessons from you. I'll be up there in a little while."

MALINDA. "I reckon after you'v took another lesson in love-makin' you'll be ready to larn somethin' useful." (Exit Malinda.)

Lucile sits in pleasant reverie for a few moments, when she is aroused by Carroll Arnold slipping quietly into the room. Carroll's hair is disheveled, his eyes wild looking, his manner nervous and unnatural.

LUCILE (startled). "Oh, you took me so by surprise that I actually jumped." (She laughs somewhat nervously.)

CARROLL (coming very close and peering into her face). "Hush. I do not want any one to know I am here. I have been waiting to find you alone."

LUCILE (frightened by his expression and manner, draws back). "Why did you want to see me alone? Is there anything I can do for you?"

(Carroll still peering into her face, with a wild, crazy expression in his eyes. Lucile, thoroughly frightened, tries to move away. He catches her violently by the wrist.)

CARROLL. "Do not make a sound; if you do I shall have to kill you at once. I tried to hate you, too, but I could not. You are innocent of any wrong, and you, too, have suffered. It would be cowardly in me to take my own life, and leave you here helpless and defenseless. I have been walking through hell, and little devils have been mocking me. Do you hear that? Bastard, bastard! My mother, oh God, my mother. But I struck the man dead who ruined her life. And now I am going to save you from her cruel fate. You know you told me who the man was; but for you I should not have known him. Ah, but didn't he shrink and cower before me?" (He laughs wildly. Then draws a pistol.) "You must not be afraid to die; life is not worth the living."

The Captain slips quietly into the room and up behind Carroll and grabs the pistol before he is aware of his presence. The Captain discharges the pistol in the air, then throws it from him and grabs Carroll, who is startled and lets go of Lucile, who reels back. Percy, the negro butler, Amanda and Malinda rush in from different directions. The butler to the aid of the Captain takes hold of Carroll, who is wildly gesticulating. Percy rushes to Lucile and takes her in his arms.

PERCY. "Oh, my God! Are you hurt?"

Lucile clings hysterically to him.

LUCILE. "No."

AMANDA. "What is the matter? Is Lucile hurt?"

MALINDA. "What's happened? Who shot that pistol?"

CAPTAIN. "Nobody is hurt; I shot the pistol to bring help. This boy is crazy. We must get him away from here."

CARROLL. "No, no. I will not go. Don't you see I must kill her, then myself?" (As the Captain, aided by the butler, takes him from the stage, Amanda and Malinda sink into chairs, nervous and frightened. Percy with his arms still about Lucile, whose head is on his breast.)

PERCY. "I thank God that you are safe, my darling."

CURTAIN.

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